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SUBJECT: KARADA AND COUNCIL BLUFFS - SISTER CITIES

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¶1. Summary: A new sister-city partnership between Council Bluffs, Iowa and the Karada district of Baghdad promises to be a foundation for cooperation between the two cities. Leaders from Council Bluffs and the Karada District Council, joined up by videoconference on October 28, committed themselves to cooperation in fields as diverse as education, health, business, and municipal governance. Baghdad EPRT-2 and Baghdad PRT will build on this first step through a series of programs designed to take advantage of resources in the Council Bluffs region and to build stronger people-to-people relations between the two cities. End summary.

¶2. The leaders of Baghdad,s Karada district and of Council Bluffs, Iowa launched a sister-city partnership on October 28 that both sides (and we) intend to be the foundation for future cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between the two cities. In a virtual signing ceremony via digital video-conference, the Karada district council, chaired by Dr. Mohammed al-Rubeiy, and the Council Bluffs city council, led by Mayor Thomas Hanafan, introduced themselves and briefly discussed some of the differences in local governance between the two entities. Chairman Mohammed expressed his appreciation and enthusiasm for the agreement, saying Karada stood to benefit greatly from working with Council Bluffs. Mayor Hanafan, who was joined by members of the well-established Council Bluffs Sister City organization, said Council Bluffs' citizens understood the importance of reaching out to Iraqis and affirmed his city,s commitment to build a substantive relationship that would benefit residents of both cities. Baghdad EPRT-2 Team Leader Tribble expressed appreciation to the Council Bluffs community leaders involved, outlined some of the activities that the partnership would make possible, and urged leaders on both sides to make of it something substantive and useful to citizens on both sides. At the end of the 90-minute discussion, Chairman Mohammed and Mayor Hanafan signed matching English and Arabic-language copies of a &Friendship Agreement8 (full text below). Local Iowa press covered the event (several Iraqi media representatives were invited but did not attend). Embassy Baghdad Public Affairs issued a press release about the event, resulting in some interest in follow up stories stories by Iraq-based media.

¶3. The launch of the Karada-Council Bluffs partnership is a first step in what we hope will become a vibrant dialogue between the two cities. Baghdad EPRT-2 is organizing a privately-funded visit to Council Bluffs by a cross-section of Karada community leaders: district council, municipality, business, higher education, and NGOs. The idea is to bring them to Iowa in the spring of 2009 for a series of meetings corresponding to their different interests. District council leaders will focus on municipal government and citizen participation, for example, while Karada business leaders will meet with Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to learn how to organize the private sector for advocacy. Representatives of the University of Baghdad and 2-3 other educational institutes in Karada will spend time at the College of St. Mary,s in Elk Horn, Iowa, while the head of

the Baghdad Dental School will sit down with professors at Creighton University. These plans may change, of course, but our goal is to provide an opportunity for leaders in specific sectors to build strong people-to-people relationships that will lead to more concrete cooperation once the Iraqis return home. To help ensure that this happens, we are looking to use QRF funds to help some of these institutions acquire video-conferencing capabilities, and we will use the facilities at Baghdad PRT to hold preparatory discussions in the months leading up to the trip.

¶4. Primary credit for this initiative goes to LTC Rick Burns, a civil affairs officer in the 4th BCT, 10th Mountain Division, the brigade in which Baghdad EPRT-2 is embedded. LTC Burns, a resident of Iowa, worked hard over several months to put the partnership together, building support back home through his personal connections and working closely with EPRT-2 to line up projects as follow-up. He is returning home to Iowa in November and we will continue to work with him to put "meat on the bones" of the partnership.

¶5. The Karada-Council Bluffs partnership was established under the umbrella of the formal Sister City relationship set up in 2004 between Baghdad Province and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The Baghdad-Denver connection has seen a series of exchanges since then (see <http://www.drcog.org/>). Karada Chairman Mohammed and other Baghdad leaders visited Denver in April 2005 in one such program. In planning for the spring 2009 trip, we are also working with DRCOG to put together a program for the Karada delegation in Denver that would immediately follow the Iowa stay.

¶6. Comment: The Karada-Council Bluffs partnership is an excellent example of civil-military cooperation on the U.S. side ) in this case, EPRT working closely with Brigade Civil Affairs units. More importantly, it offers a framework for building something that will last after the U.S.

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civil/military presence is no longer so visible and active at the local level. Our message to Karada,s leaders is that they need to be active in taking advantage of the resources being offered to them. We will set them up for success through initial steps and the provision of some basic infrastructure (e.g. video-conferencing open for use by Karada organizations at the Karada district council building and at one or more educational institutions). The substance of the partnership, however, will need to be developed by them and by the citizens and leaders of Council Bluffs. End comment.

¶7. Full text of Karada-Council Bluffs agreement:

AGREEMENT OF FRIENDSHIP

Whereas, to the people of Karadah, Baghdad, Iraq, the City of Council Bluffs, Iowa, agrees to promote and carry out projects of interest to help the people of Karadah establish their own governing bodies, learning better ideas of progressing their city and enabling them to become more proficient in medical and dental programs to the benefit of their citizens; and

Whereas, these ideas are based on mutual benefit and equality between the two parties.

Now, therefore, this Agreement should form a relationship of mutual trust between the two entities.

In recognition of the need to diminish differences between people of all lands, we do sign this Agreement of Friendship. The foregoing instrument is acknowledged before us, on behalf of our two communities on this 28th day of October, 2008, in the City of Council Bluffs, Iowa by Thomas P. Hanafan, Mayor (U.S. City) and Dr. Mohammed al-Rubeiy for the City of Karadah, Baghdad, Iraq.

¶8. Text of Council Bluffs resolution:

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA, AND THE PROVINCE OF KARADAH, BAGHDAD, IRAQ.

WHEREAS, the cities of Council Bluffs and Karadah wish to enter into an agreement to foster goodwill between the two cities; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the City of Council

Bluffs to enter into an Agreement of Friendship with this city in Iraq.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

That the Mayor is hereby authorized and directed to sign the Agreement of Friendship between Council Bluffs and Karadah, Baghdad, Iraq.

End text.

CROCKER